

## KENYA, UGANDA AND TANZANIA EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

## AWARDS (KUTERA) DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP :

## OPENING REMARKS.

Kabiru Kinyanjui

1. It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome all of you on behalf of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to this KUTERA Dissemination Workshop. We wish to extend a special welcome to the researchers and colleagues who have come from Tanzania and Uganda. Karibu!

On behalf of the IDRC Regional Director, EARO, and the Population, Education and Society Program (PESP), (Social Sciences Division), I wish to congratulate the researchers who have completed their research which will be the subject of the deliberations of this Workshop. We in the PESP are delighted to note that this small-grants research scheme has taken root, and its output is before us in terms of research reports, and by the presence of educational researchers from this region. The workshop, therefore, facilitates the sharing of experiences and research concerns which is a vital element in improving and strengthening research environment in the region.

2. Let me take this opportunity to remind ourselves the background and context under which this project was conceived and initiated. KUTERA was initiated in 1987 out

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of the realization of some the critical problems which researchers and research institutions faced. These problems needed concerted attention of donors as well as researchers, if tangible improvements in educational research environment in the region was to be realized. Firstly, it was recognized that researchers in the region were too few, limited in their skills, and isolated from each other. Indeed, their impact on policy was very limited. In short the region lacked a research community which could promote and sustain quality research output.

Secondly, it was observed that educational research institutions in the region were weak, resources-starved and fragmented. There was very limited linkages between these institutions within each country or between the East African countries. Indeed, previous institutional linkages and cooperation under East African Community had declined or deteriorated to an extent they that are longer useful. On the other hand, those institutions in existence have limited impact on educational research and policy analysis.

Thirdly, the research which was being undertaken was often academically oriented, and had almost no impact on education policy and practice.

KUTERA was therefore initiated to address these problems through small research grants, training, interaction between researchers and by dissemination of research findings. It is therefore, important to bear in mind these objectives when assessing the reports which are to be presented in the Workshop in the coming three days.

3. It should be noted that KUTERA has not been the only funding mechanism for dealing with these research concerns in Eastern African. Donors agencies and governments in the region have continued their efforts to improve and strengthen social sciences research capacity. Institutions and networks for dealing with these issues have been established in the region and are functional (eg OSSREA, CODESRIA, African Academy of Sciences etc.). In addition, the traditional mechanism of funding individual researchers and institutions are still in place. The ERNESA and KUTERA are perhaps unique in this region, because they have the mandate of dealing with education research concerns.

However, the conditions which promoted KUTERA initiative, and the need for other educational research have not disappeared. Indeed, the research environment has become worse on account of continued economic crisis leading to serious decline of institutional capacity. It is common

knowledge that institutions which are expected to produce or utilize education research have continued to experience shortage of resources and qualified professional staff. Hence, the need for accelerated measures to rehabilitate, revitalize and strengthen capacity for educational research, policy analysis and utilization, is as urgent, if not more so, as it was five years ago.

4. The small grants administered under KUTERA are perhaps needed more today than previously thought. Increased expansion of education at all levels under limited resources require research and policy analysis which policy makers and practitioners can utilize in making critical decisions for financing, management and reform of the education sector. The existing attempts to change school curriculum, improve quality and equity under circumstances of limited resources - has also posed challenges to researchers to come up with research findings which can guide the practitioners in these difficult times. I regard this as a challenge, as well as an opportunity for educational researchers and policy analysts.
5. In view of the above, it is necessary to emphasize some elements which policy makers, practitioners and end-users expect of researchers. They expect researchers to produce quality research based on sound scientific research methods.

Secondly, they expect that the research produced to be relevant and available when decisions are made. Thirdly, if research findings are to be utilized they have to be presented in a format which is easily understood, attractive and implementable. Finally, the researchers and policy analysts have to sell their research and disseminate it in such a way that it cannot escape the attention of interested groups.

6. With these expectations, we need to assess how far the research reports to be discussed here, have come close to fulfilling these and other criteria for quality research. While I am impressed by the number of research projects completed, I must confess that we are far from realizing the above goals. Based on some of the reports which I have read, I wish to observe that the quality of research done, the methodology utilized, theoretical under-pinnings of the studies, data analysis, and policy orientation is far from impressive. This is especially so, if they are assessed from the perspective of those who might want to utilize these findings - policy makers and academics. In short, while the theme of the first KUTERA competition, "Education and Work" is apt and relevant, the research reports to be presented here have hardly done justice to the theme or achieved the expected standards.

I wish therefore, to request the researchers, theme experts, national coordinators and the regional coordinator to pay attention to the experiences accumulated while undertaking this research. The experience so far gained is useful, but let us disseminate the lessons learnt for the benefit of those undertaking their research at the moment. In this way, I hope, we can influence the quality of work currently being done.

7. The researchers gathered here need also to note that KUTERA themes need to be continually informed by the emerging educational concerns in our countries, Africa and the world as a whole. The concern for Basic Education for All, higher education, literacy, women education and the impact of structural adjustment on education, are some of the issues which could inform and influence education research discourse and activities in this region. In short KUTERA related researchers should be in the fore-front of current education debates, as well as breaking new research grounds by generating new ideas and knowledge. At the same time we should be identifying, encouraging and fostering new talents and researchers to emerge and flower.

It is not encouraging to see the same senior researchers who are supposed to be training the recipients of these grants

competing for the same KUTERA funds. They should be the ones bringing to the fore promising young scholars who need research training and encouragement.

8. KUTERA, as many of you will agree with me, provides a unique opportunity to build and strengthen research capacity in our institutions and countries. During these days of limited resources, what is available should be utilized efficiently and effectively in undertaking priority research and dissemination. In this way, we can benefit not only individual researchers, and institutions involved, but also the whole process of linking education research with policy and practice. This then is a call for creativity, and dedication to the ideals of quality, relevance and utilization of education research and policy analysis.
9. Before I conclude, let me recognize the commendable work which the researchers, theme experts, national coordinators and others have made for the achievements so far realized by KUTERA. Without your dedicated work and support of the institutions which you come from, (Makerere, Kenyatta, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi) this would have not been possible. IDRC is proud of all these efforts and we look forward to the continuation of the existing partnership in the improvement and strengthening of research capacity in the region. I wish also to compliment Dr Kilemi Mwiria for the efforts and

energies which he has expended into the work of KUTERA in the last four years. We are all grateful to him for the way he has guided KUTERA in these initial stages. We look forward to his continued efforts in this field.

10. Finally, I want to assure you that PESP is committed to this scheme, and we hope to extend it to another phase. I look forward therefore, to your suggestions, criticisms and other inputs to improve the operation and impact<sup>q</sup> these small research awards in East Africa. Let me reiterate that IDRC is very committed to serving and working with young educational researchers and institutions in the region through this scheme.

With these few words, I wish this KUTERA Dissemination Workshop success.

Thank you.

Malindi, Kenya.

August 27 1990.